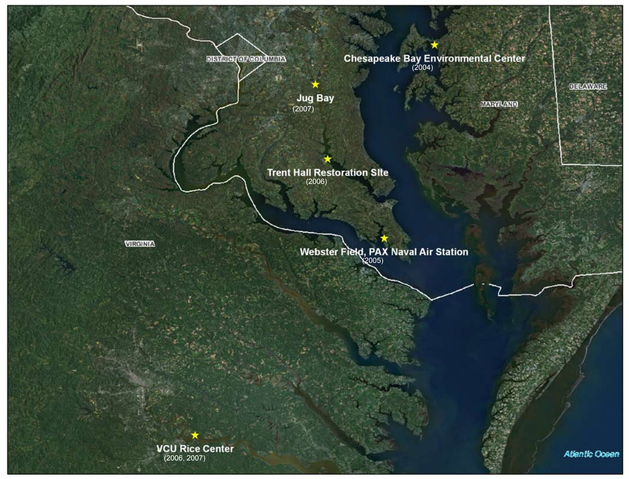
NOAA Restoration Day: Volunteering to Restore Chesapeake Bay



NOAA Restoration Day is an annual event that provides a fieldwork opportunity for 150 – 200 agency staff to restore critical wetland and underwater grass habitat in the Chesapeake Bay. It utilizes in-house scientific expertise, existing partnerships, NOAA staff, and supports an ongoing restoration project. Each year the event location varies, and it grows in popularity and complexity.

NOAA Restoration Day is one of the largest voluntary federal employee sponsored environmental stewardship events in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It allows NOAA employees to put the mission they support in their office work into action by demonstrating their commitment to Bay restoration and protection. The project first began in 2004 through a staff-lead partnership between the NOAA Ocean Service and NOAA Fisheries Service. In 2006, it was expanded from a Maryland event to include a second coordinated event in Virginia. Since it started, over 500 NOAA staff have now had a field experience that educates them about coastal restoration science.

This event helps to build staff morale, allows staff to meet new people within the agency, and improves understanding of NOAA science through interactive learning. This project promotes volunteerism and increases understanding of Bay restoration among NOAA staff, partners and the public. After participating, volunteers are more aware of the issues impacting the Chesapeake Bay and steps they can take to make a difference. The tradition of NOAA Restoration Day continues to inspire a personal sense of stewardship for one of our nation's treasures, the Chesapeake Bay.

Restoration activities vary by location, and often include:

- planting underwater grasses previously grown in NOAA offices
- fish seining and sampling
- removing invasive plants
- planting wetland grasses
- digital elevation mapping
- water quality monitoring
- planting native trees and shrubs
- removing trash
- seeding offshore oyster reefs

2004
Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center. Grasonville, MD

90 NOAA staff participated.

Activities:
- Planted underwater grasses previously grown in NOAA offices (15 grow tanks, 45 trays)
- Native oyster restoration (25 bags)
- Planted marsh grasses (1,000 plants)
- Removed trash
- Constructed floating dock
- Terrapin protection seminar
- Installed biologs for shoreline stabilization

2005
Webster Field, PAX Naval Air Station. St. Inigoes, MD

110 NOAA staff participated.

Activities:
- Planted underwater grasses previously grown in NOAA offices (17 grow tanks, 51 trays)
- Native oyster restoration (100 bags)
- Planted marsh grasses (5,400 plants)
- Removed trash
- Removed invasive plants

2006: Joint Events in Maryland and Virginia

Trent Hall Restoration Site. Mechanicsville, MD

140 total participants (125 NOAA staff; 14 students and teachers).

Activities:
- Planted underwater grasses previously grown (19 NOAA grow tanks, 3 school tanks; 66 trays)
- Native oyster restoration (100 bags)
- Planted marsh grasses (1,600 plants)
- Sampled fish and invertebrate
- Monitored water quality
- Presentation on tide station and water level analysis
- Demonstrated coastal bottom mapping techniques via NOAA vessel
- Conducted shore bird survey
- Monitored plant survival
- Demonstrated digital elevation mapping

VCU Rice Environmental Center. Charles City, VA

50+ NOAA staff, state partners and students participated.

Activities:
- Planted underwater grass previously grown in NOAA offices (19 grow tanks, 57 trays)
- Built and installed nesting boxes for migratory Prothonotary Warblers (24 boxes)
- Removed marine debris from the James River Shoreline
- Collected water quality data

2007: Joint Events in Maryland and Virginia

Jug Bay - Chesapeake Bay NERR. Upper Marlboro, MD

180 total participants (160+ NOAA staff; 20 partners)

Activities:
- Planted underwater grasses previously grown in NOAA offices (22 grow tanks, 66 trays)
- Transplanted wild rice (1,000 plants)
- Sampled, seined and trawled for fish
- Mapped and removed invasive plants
- Built Wood Duck boxes (62 boxes)
- Surveyed flora and fauna using marsh transects
- GPS/digital elevation mapping
- Monitored water quality
- Planted native trees and shrubs (439 plants)
- Surveyed native underwater grasses via canoe
- Removed an old boardwalk and elevated a second boardwalk

VCU Rice Environmental Center. Charles City, VA

80 total participants (40 NOAA staff; 40 partners)

Activities:
- Planted native marsh grasses
- Cleared debris
- Released an Atlantic Sturgeon

http://restorationday.noaa.gov

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